Fire safety of metal *balconies* and balustrades

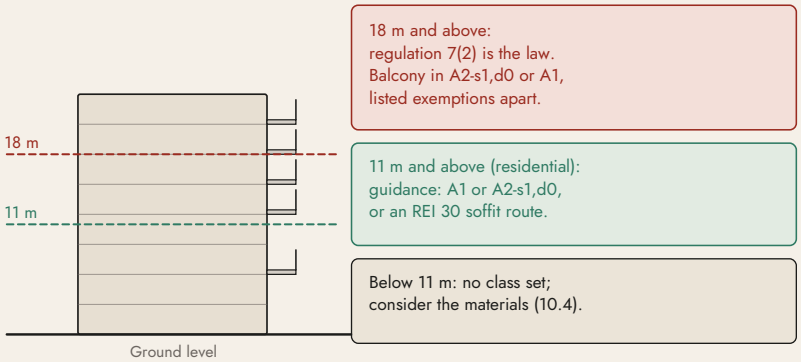
The two heights that matter for a metal balcony on a residential building, from Approved Document B (England), with the exemptions and the evidence to ask for. General guidance, not fire-engineering advice.

Compliance guidance. From Approved Document B (2019 edition with amendments to 2026), England. Regulation 7 is quoted as printed there, not from the legislation. A fire engineer or building control body must confirm the route for each building. Guidance, not legal or fire-engineering advice.

AT A GLANCE

Topic	What Approved Document B says (England)	Where	What to do
Regulation 7(2), a legal requirement	Building with a storey at least 18 m above ground level that contains a dwelling, an institution or a room for residential purposes (hotels, hostels and student accommodation are named). Materials that become part of an external wall or a specified attachment, which includes a balcony, must be class A2-s1,d0 or A1 to BS EN 13501-1, except those exempted by 7(3).	ADB Vol 1 para 10.14; Vol 2 para 12.15	Every balcony part: frame, posts, rails, infill, soffit, cladding.
The 11 m guidance	Residential purpose groups 1 and 2, storey 11 m or more in height: a balcony should either contain only class A1 or A2-s1,d0 materials (with a list of exceptions) or have an imperforate soffit with REI 30 in class A2-s1,d0 or better, plus a 300 mm band at compartment boundaries. Regulation 7(2) prevails where it applies.	Vol 1 para 10.10; Vol 2 para 12.11	Guidance, not the regulation. Building Control decides alternatives.
Exempt from 7(2)	Door frames and doors; seals, gaskets, fixings, sealants and backer rods; window frames and glass; thermal breaks where needed for Part L; the top horizontal floor layer of a balcony in class A1fl or A2fl-s1 over an imperforate substrate; and other items in 7(3).	Reg 7(3)	Ask whether each part is on the list. A balustrade is not.
Metal composite materials	Regulation 7(1A) bans relevant metal composite material from external walls and specified attachments of any building, at any height.	Reg 7(1A); paras 10.11, 10.12	No aluminium composite panels on a balcony.
Evidence	Untested products cannot be classified to BS EN 13501-1. A classification applies within its field of application, such as the substrate it was tested on. Small changes in fixing, joint or dimension can change performance.	Appendix B, B2, B6, B8	Classification report for the product as supplied.

A2-s1,d0 reads: class A2, smoke production s1 (lowest), no flaming droplets d0. A1 is the highest class. Heights are measured as in Diagram D6 of the Approved Document.



The 11 m and 18 m lines. Schematic. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio, after Approved Document B and regulation 7.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

BALCONY IN A RELEVANT BUILDING (18 M AND ABOVE)

All materials of balcony [B1], including frame, posts, rails, handrail, infill, soffit and any cladding, are to be class A2-s1,d0 or A1 to BS EN 13501-1 in accordance with regulation 7(2) of the Building Regulations 2010, other than components exempted by regulation 7(3). The top horizontal floor layer may be class A1fl or A2fl-s1 over an imperforate substrate. A classification report for each product as supplied is to be issued before ordering.

BALCONY ON A RESIDENTIAL BUILDING (11 M OR MORE)

Balconies at [level or height] on a building with a residential purpose and a storey [11 m or more] above ground level are to comply with Approved Document B Volume [1 / 2] paragraph [10.10 / 12.11], by route [(a) only class A1 or A2-s1,d0 materials with the listed exceptions / (b) imperforate soffit, REI [30] minimum, class A2-s1,d0 or better, with a [300] mm band at compartment boundaries]. Where regulation 7(2) applies it prevails.

METAL COMPOSITE MATERIALS

No relevant metal composite material, as defined in regulation 2(6), is to be used in any external wall or specified attachment (regulation 7(1A)).

SUBSTITUTION AND EVIDENCE

No substitution of any balcony component, coating, infill or interlayer without written approval from [fire engineer] and the building control body. Each classification report applies only to the product, substrate and fixing as tested. Reports to be filed in the fire documentation pack.

TERMS USED

Reaction to fire (Euroclass)
The classification of a product under BS EN 13501-1: A1, A2, B, C, D, E or F, with A1 the highest. A2 to E carry smoke (s1 to s3) and flaming droplet (d0 to d2) ratings.

Specified attachment
As defined in Approved Document B, includes a balcony attached to an external wall, solar panels and solar shading.

Relevant building
Under regulation 7(4): a building with a storey at least 18 m above ground level that contains a dwelling, an institution or a room for residential purposes.

Imperforate
Without holes. A balcony's floor layer needs an imperforate substrate under it for the floor-layer exemption.

REI 30
A fire resistance rating: 30 minutes of load-bearing capacity (R), integrity (E) and insulation (I).

CWFT
Classification Without Further Testing: a list of products the European Commission has classified without individual tests. Approved Document B points to EUR-Lex for the list.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- Approved Document B Volume 1 (dwellings) and Volume 2 (buildings other than dwellings), 2019 edition incorporating 2020, 2022, 2025 and 2026 amendments, for England: gov.uk page updated 16 Sep 2026; both PDFs read 7 Nov 2026.
- Building Regulations 2010, regulation 7: as printed in the Approved Document; the legislation was not read.
- BS EN 13501-1: classification standard named by regulation 7(2); a listing summary shows the 2018 edition current; not read.
- BS EN ISO 1716: named in the definition of metal composite material; not read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/fire-safety-of-metal-balconies-and-balustrades. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.